

# Program Helps Parolees Find Home

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"DOC is looking for candidates who have absolutely no stable housing available upon their release and no access to any other forms of housing assistance. Enrollment is limited to parolees, because the DOC already will be maintaining supervision upon their release. The only group excluded from the program are sex offenders because of the unique challenges they face as a result of housing restrictions"

Diane Mains,

DOC Re-entry Program Manager

Twenty percent or more of the 16,000 people released this year from the state prison system have no stable place to call home.

This not only costs society money, but increases the chance of offenders committing further crimes, according to Diane Mains, re-entry program manager with the Indiana Department of Correction.

In hope of addressing the situation and the wider problem of homelessness, the DOC has teamed up with the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority to initiate a rental subsidy program for parolees.

The pilot program is targeting Porter, Lake, LaPorte, Marion and Madison counties, said IHCD Executive Director Sherry Seiwert.

Seiwert and other officials plan to gather Monday at the Westville Correctional Facility to sign a contract with the Northwest Indiana Reentry Partnership, which will administer the subsidy program locally.

The DOC and the housing authority are contributing a total of \$500,000 toward the first year of the

effort, Seiwert said. The money should be enough to provide rental assistance to 50 parolees the first year.

Participants will undergo an evaluation after three months in the program and the number of those helped could increase if some become self-reliant during the year, said Jacqueline Troy, who coordinates a housing assistance program for the IHCD.

Housing, transportation and employment are the three big obstacles facing offenders upon their release from prison, Troy said. The health of one impacts the other two, she said.

While some may have problems with providing this sort of assistance to offenders, Seiwert said the cost of doing nothing could be more. In addition to the cost associated with providing continued assistance to a homeless offender, she said there are issues of recidivism and public safety to consider.

Considering the limited amount of assistance available, the DOC is looking for candidates who have absolutely no stable housing available upon their release and no access to any other forms of housing assistance, Mains said.

Enrollment is limited to parolees, because the DOC already will be maintaining supervision upon their release, she said. The only group excluded from the program are sex offenders because of the unique challenges they face as a result of housing restrictions, she said.

The new program is part of the statewide Ten Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness, according to Charles Coley, homeless liaison with the IHCD.

The plan was initiated a year ago and includes efforts to increase access to disability benefits to the chronic homeless, as well as sponsorship of a homeless walk in April that will benefit nearly 100 nonprofit assistance providers, he said.

## **About The Department of Correction**

The Department employs over 8,000 employees and houses 24,000 adult and juveniles in 32 facilities, ranging from minimum to maximum custody, prison camps, juvenile facilities and work release centers. The Department's home page on the Internet can be found at: <http://www.in.gov/indcorrection>. The Department's Re-entry Site can be found: <http://www.reentry.in.gov>.

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